

In order to ensure a strong start to 2020-2021, school systems should attend to the well-being of students and staff.

Addressing the [well-being of students and staff](#) will require that schools:

1. Acknowledge and address the unique end and start of school.
2. Prioritize positive, intentional relationships.
3. Attend to individual students' needs.
4. Respond to student behavior with appropriate support.

This document supports the efforts of schools to **create and utilize a Mental Health Response Team**.

Introduction

Research shows that:

- One in five students will “experience a significant mental health problem” while in school (SAMHSA, 2019; Siceloff, Bradley & Florry, 2019).
- Seventy percent of students who need treatment will not receive the appropriate services to meet their needs (Perou, et al., 2013).

It is not always easy to identify which students or staff may have experienced traumatic events that can impact their social, emotional, or mental health. This guidance details how to create and implement a mental health leadership team (MHLT) responsible for:

1. Identifying and responding to needs,
2. Curating and distributing resources, and
3. Supporting families during crisis.

Establish a School Mental Health Leadership Team

The Mental Health Leadership Team (MHLT) should consist of two-to-three school staff including a school administrator (principal or assistant principal), a professional school counselor/social worker or other trained mental health professional, and a veteran classroom teacher. You may be able to leverage the existing SBLC team to serve in this role and/or you may need to create a new team.

Roles of the MHLT

Clearly define roles and responsibilities of each MHLT member. It is important that there is a shared responsibility amongst team members, so that one team member does not end up taking on too much responsibility and to ensure a shared sense of belonging to the team. Determine who will facilitate the meetings and who will take and distribute meeting notes. Be clear about the purpose and role of the MHLT, determine who else in the school should provide feedback or weigh in on decisions, and orient the team to be generative about solutions. The following roles are recommended.

Responsibilities of the MHLT

The primary purpose of the MHLT is to increase awareness of and responsiveness to the mental health of students, staff, and families.

- Identify and Respond to Needs
 - Identify key areas to screen students and select an appropriate [screening](#).
 - Implement evidence-based, culturally responsive mental health practices within a multi-tiered framework.
 - Determine a plan for checking on the [general well-being of staff](#).
 - Continually assess the climate and well-being of school/students using a [survey to monitor culture and climate](#).
- Curate and Distribute Resources
 - Develop and maintain up-to-date contact lists of [community resources and mental health providers](#) that are reviewed and updated at least quarterly.
 - Provide school staff with supports from community partner organizations and [self-care resources](#).
 - Collect and distribute local MH provider resources from the school system's Human Resources department.
 - Determine and deploy professional development (PD) for teachers.
- Support Families During Crisis
 - Set up and maintain a student hotline staffed by central office personnel or trained volunteers from the educator's association, retired administrators, etc. Provide a script and answers to frequently asked questions. Have hotline staff log calls and keep track of new questions that arise.
 - Provide resources to help families [talk to students about trauma](#).

Establishing an MHLT

- Determine [teaming structures](#).
- Set regular meeting times and clear goals, responsibilities, and timelines.
- Establish a decision making protocol [e.g. [Flowchart for Decision Making](#) (Appendix A), [School Mental Health Referral and Triage Flow Charts](#) (p. 98-99)]

Other Resources

[Checklist for School Personnel to Evaluate and Implement the Mental Health Component of Your School Crisis and Emergency Plan, NCTSN](#)
[Student Services Checklist](#)